

Ministry of Human Resources

Annual Report 1997-98



**BRITISH
COLUMBIA**

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data
British Columbia. Ministry of Human Resources.
[Annual report (1997)]
Annual report. -- 1996/97 -

Annual.
Report year ends Mar. 31.
Continues in part: British Columbia. Ministry of
Social Services. Annual report. ISSN 1198-5380
ISSN 1480-7866 = Annual report - British Columbia.
Ministry of Human Resources (1997)

1. British Columbia. Ministry of Human Resources -
Periodicals. 2. Public welfare - British Columbia
- Periodicals. 3. Social services - British
Columbia - Periodicals. I. Title.

HV109.B7B74

353.5'09711'05

C98-960102-1

Table of Contents

Letters of Transmittal	v
Expenditures, 1997-98	1
Organization Chart	3
Ministry Regions	4
Ministry Overview	5
BC Benefits Programs	6
Field Services and Program Operations	14
Labour Market Attachment	15
Health Services	17
Prevention, Compliance and Enforcement	18
Emergency Social Services	22
Performance Measurement and Management Information	24
Planning	24
Communications	25
Corporate Services	27
Intergovernmental Relations	27
Information and Privacy Office	28
Client Call Unit	29
Correspondence Unit	29
Finance and Management Services	30
Financial Services	30
Budgets and Financial Planning	31
Administrative Services	32
Personnel Services	35
Information Technology	38



**The Honourable Garde Gardom
Lieutenant Governor
The Province of British Columbia**

May it please your honour:

On July 21, 1999, the Ministry of Human Resources and components of other ministries were brought together under the new Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security.

It is a pleasure to submit to you, as Minister of Social Development and Economic Security, the annual report for the Ministry of Human Resources for the period of April 1, 1997 to March 31, 1998.

**Moe Sihota
Minister of Social Development
and Economic Security**

**The Honourable Moe Sihota
Minister of Social Development and Economic Security
The Province of British Columbia**

Dear Minister:

It is a pleasure to submit to you, as Deputy Minister of Social Development and Economic Security, the annual report for the Ministry of Human Resources for the period of April 1, 1997 to March 31, 1998.



**Sharon Manson Singer
Deputy Minister of Social Development
and Economic Security**

IMPORTANT NOTE CONCERNING THE FOLLOWING PAGES

THE PAGES WHICH FOLLOW HAVE BEEN FILMED TWICE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE BEST REPRODUCTIVE QUALITY

USERS SHOULD CONSULT ALL THE PAGES REPRODUCED ON THE FICHE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN A COMPLETE READING OF THE TEXT.

REMARQUE IMPORTANTE CONCERNANT LES PAGES QUI SUIVENT

LES PAGES SUIVANTES ONT ÉTÉ REPRODUITES EN DOUBLE AFIN D'AMÉLIORER LA QUALITÉ DE REPRODUCTION

LES UTILISATEURS DOIVENT CONSULTER TOUTES LES PAGES REPRODUITES SUR LA FICHE AFIN D'OBTENIR LA LECTURE DU TEXTE INTÉGRAL

micromedia
a division of IHS Canada

20 Victoria Street
Toronto, Ontario M5C 2N8
Tel.: (416) 362-5211
Toll Free: 1-800-387-2689
Fax: (416) 362-6161
Email: info@micromedia.on.ca

Ministry of Human Resources Expenditures, 1997-98 (millions)

Description	Salaries and Benefits	Operating Costs	Asset Acquisition	Grants and Contributions	Other Expenditures	Recoveries	Total Expenditures
Minister's Office	0.35	0.03					0.38
Program Management							
Income Support	87.41	34.15	6.10	0.04	0.03		127.73
Income Support Programs							
Income Support for							
Youth Works				153.34			153.34
Administered Benefits & Services				50.65	16.34		66.99
Tangible Capital Assets			(7.93)				(7.93)
Transfer Adjustments ¹			3.88				3.88
Total Expenditures	108.23	48.08	7.78	1,494.13	17.34	(17.01)	1,658.55

¹ To transfer capital assets and amortization expense to other appropriations

Minister's Office – provides for salaries of the minister, the minister's staff and related office expenses.

Ministry Operations – provides for income support, and health and dental care services to those in need.

Program Management

General – provides for overall direction, development and support of ministry programs, including ministry executive, communications, policy planning and performance measurement, personnel services and staff training, financial operations, financial planning, systems support services, and facilities and records management. It also provides for emergency social services coordination and delivery, ministry requirements for postal services, office furniture and equipment, and banking services. Recoveries are received from ministries for services provided on their behalf.

Income Support - direct operating costs of delivering income support programs.

Health Services - direct operating costs of delivering health care and dental services.

Income Support Programs - direct income support benefits paid as grants to eligible recipients or to organizations for the provision of Administered Benefits and Services. Recoveries are received from the federal government, from assignments authorized by statutes and legislation, from repayable benefits and overpayments, and from agencies contributing to or sharing in the cost of sponsored services.

Income Assistance - income support to persons eligible under the BC Benefits (Income Assistance) Act who do not qualify under the

Income Support for Persons with Disabilities or Youth Works. Includes support for individuals in the Welfare to Work Program.

Income Support for Persons with Disabilities - income support to designated individuals under the Disabilities Benefits program.

Youth Works - living allowances to eligible individuals participating in job search and job search training in the Youth Works Program.

Hardship Assistance - temporary income support to eligible individuals in need who do not qualify for regular benefits.

Administered Benefits and Services - community-based support services which complement and support ministry programs including the Community Services Fund, hostels and emergency shelters, home support workers, pre-employment programs, interpreter and translation services, payment of user fees on behalf of eligible persons for continuing care and alcohol and drug rehabilitation, plus other in-kind benefits such as fees for identification documents or costs incurred under the Family Maintenance Program.

Health Care and Dental Services - medical goods and services, medical transportation, diet and natal allowances, and dental and optical services for eligible individuals and families. Benefits are paid as grants and contributions to service providers or as direct grants to eligible individuals as appropriate. Recoveries are received from repayable benefits and overpayments.



Ministry of Human Resources Expenditures, 1997-98 (millions)

Description	Salaries and Benefits	Operating Costs	Asset Acquisition	Grants and Contributions	Other Expenditures	Recoveries	Total Expenditures
Minister's Office	0.35	0.03					0.38
Ministry Operations							
Program Management							
General	18.39	12.54	1.61	0.09	0.97	(0.01)	33.59
Income Support	87.41	34.15	6.10	0.04	0.03		127.73
Health Services	2.08	1.36	0.07				3.51
Income Support Programs							
Income Assistance				909.12		(7.53)	901.59
Income Support for							
Persons with Disabilities				245.27			245.27
Youth Works				153.34			153.34
Hardship Assistance				83.13		(9.47)	73.66
Administered Benefits & Services				50.65	16.34		66.99
Health Care & Dental Services				52.49			52.49
Tangible Capital Assets				(7.93)			(7.93)
Amortization Expense				4.05			4.05
Transfer Adjustments ¹				3.88			3.88
Total Expenditures	108.23	48.08	7.78	1,494.13	17.34	(17.01)	1,658.55

¹ To transfer capital assets and amortization expense to other appropriations

Minister's Office - provides for salaries of the minister, the minister's staff and related office expenses.

Ministry Operations - provides for income support, and health and dental care services to those in need.

Program Management

General - provides for overall direction, development and support of ministry programs, including ministry executive, communications, policy planning and performance measurement, personnel services and staff training, financial operations, financial planning, systems support services, and facilities and records management. It also provides for emergency social services coordination and delivery, ministry requirements for postal services, office furniture and equipment, and banking services. Recoveries are received from ministries for services provided on their behalf.

Income Support - direct operating costs of delivering income support programs.

Health Services - direct operating costs of delivering health care and dental services.

Income Support Programs - direct income support benefits paid as grants to eligible recipients or to organizations for the provision of Administered Benefits and Services. Recoveries are received from the federal government, from assignments authorized by statutes and legislation, from repayable benefits and overpayments, and from agencies contributing to or sharing in the cost of sponsored services.

Income Assistance - income support to persons eligible under the BC Benefits (Income Assistance) Act who do not qualify under the

Income Support for Persons with Disabilities or Youth Works. Includes support for individuals in the Welfare to Work Program.

Income Support for Persons with Disabilities - income support to designated individuals under the Disabilities Benefits program.

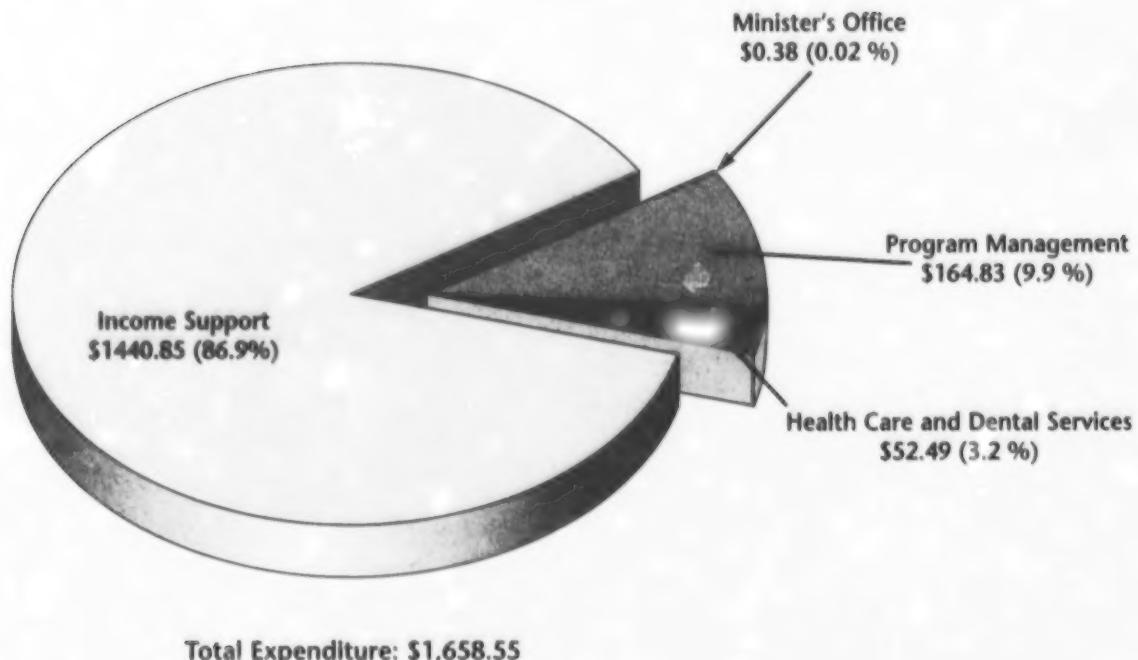
Youth Works - living allowances to eligible individuals participating in job search and job search training in the Youth Works Program.

Hardship Assistance - temporary income support to eligible individuals in need who do not qualify for regular benefits.

Administered Benefits and Services - community-based support services which complement and support ministry programs including the Community Services Fund, hostels and emergency shelters, home support workers, pre-employment programs, interpreter and translation services, payment of user fees on behalf of eligible persons for continuing care and alcohol and drug rehabilitation, plus other in-kind benefits such as fees for identification documents or costs incurred under the Family Maintenance Program.

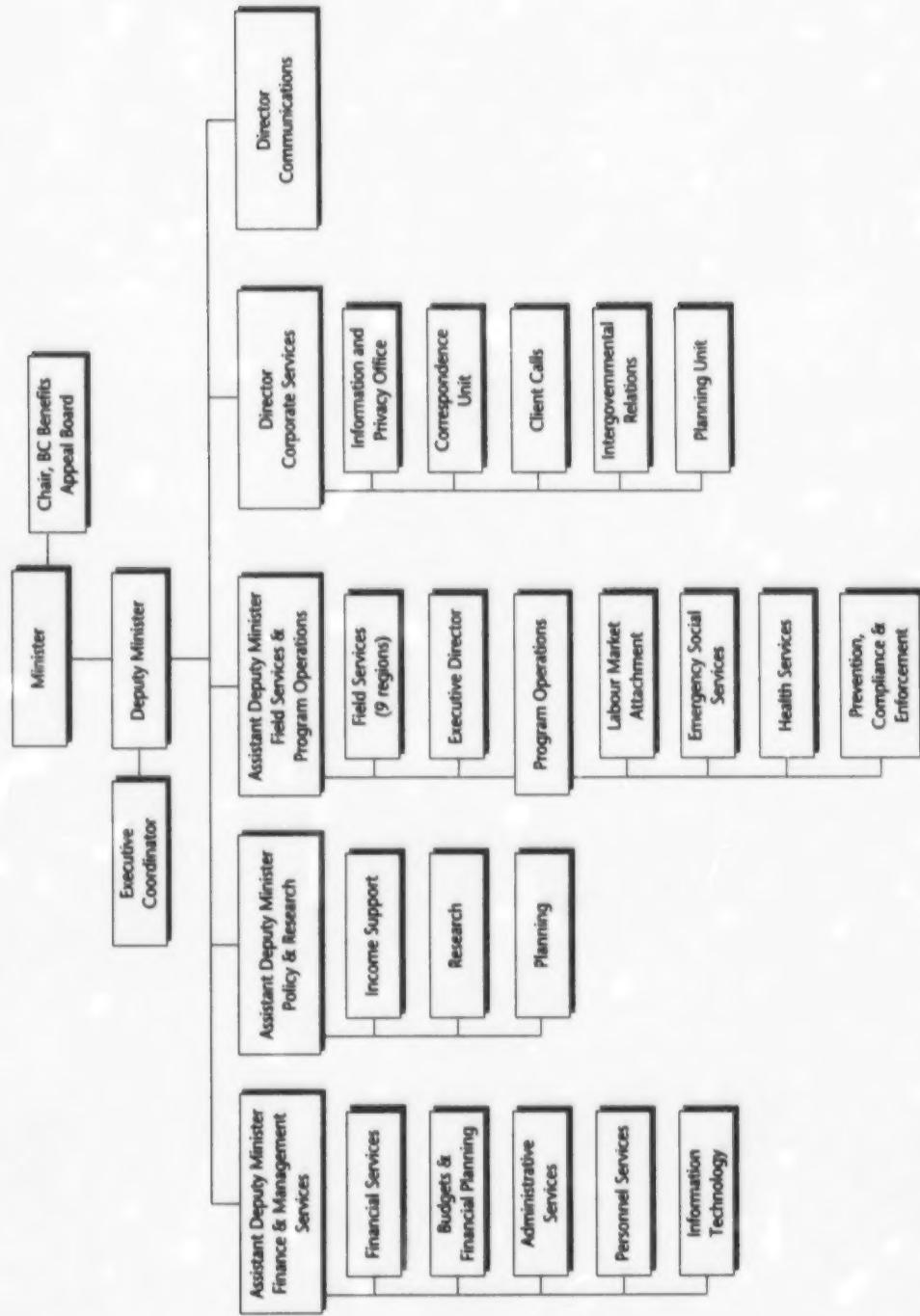
Health Care and Dental Services - medical goods and services, medical transportation, diet and natal allowances, and dental and optical services for eligible individuals and families. Benefits are paid as grants and contributions to service providers or as direct grants to eligible individuals as appropriate. Recoveries are received from repayable benefits and overpayments.

Ministry of Human Resources Expenditures, 1997-98 (millions)



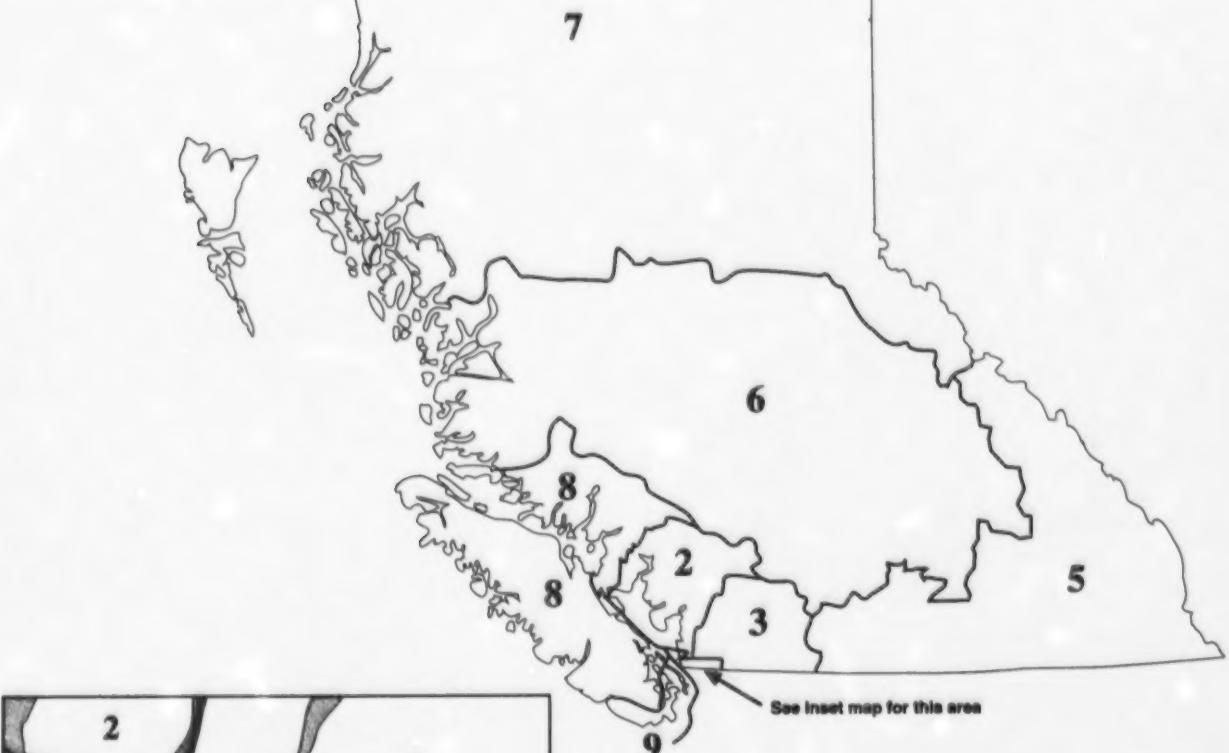
Ministry of Human Resources

March 31, 1998



Ministry of Human Resources Regions

1. Vancouver
2. Rainbow
3. Fraser North/Upper Valley
4. South Fraser
5. The Kootenay Okanagan
6. Central B.C.
7. Prince George and North
8. Greater Vancouver Island
9. Garden City



See inset map for this area



Ministry of Human Resources

Mission

The mission of the Ministry of Human Resources is to help people in British Columbia achieve economic security through attachment to the labour market and, when necessary, through income support and related services.

Vision

The ministry's vision for the future provides a long-term foundation for our values, our goals and our specific plans. Our vision is of a province where:

- people have good income from participation in the labour market;
- the ministry effectively helps people move from welfare to work;
- children are raised in families and supportive communities; and
- all people are able to contribute actively to their communities.

Values

The work of the ministry is carried out by employees who share basic values with the ministry. These values are evident in all our initiatives and in the way each of us carries out our day-to-day work. The ministry values:

- people in all their diversity;
- children, families and supportive communities;
- work over welfare;
- respect for the personal dignity of our clients;
- excellence in service;
- each other and the work we do;
- personal and corporate responsibility;
- fair decision-making;
- ideas and innovation;
- public confidence in our work; and
- partnerships with communities.

In 1995, the provincial government launched a variety of reforms to British Columbia's social safety net. The result was a series of programs known collectively as BC Benefits. The changes were designed to protect and support the most vulnerable in society – children, families, seniors and persons with disabilities – and to help those who were able to work to move from welfare to gainful employment. Since their introduction, the programs described in this report have become fully implemented and, as this report shows, have brought the intended results of supporting those in need (particularly families with children), assisting employable people in joining the labour market and reducing the numbers of people dependent on support.

- During 1997-98, the Family Bonus provided support of up to \$103 per child each month for 230,000 low and modest income families with 430,000 children.
- BC Benefits supports 36,600 people with disabilities and their dependants.
- Dental and Optical benefits are provided for 235,000 children.
- The caseload of income assistance recipients was reduced by 36,000 between December 1995 and February 1998, including a decline of 33 per cent among those aged 19 to 24 years and 20.9 per cent among those aged 25 to 59 years. The number of families with children receiving income assistance declined by 16,400, and the number of children declined by 29,800.

More than two-thirds of ministry's clients are employable and highly motivated to work. The high proportion of employable clients is a direct result of cutbacks to federal Employment Insurance (EI) programs since 1991, effectively moving the unemployed off the federal system onto the provincial income assistance program. Increasingly, the trend is to treat EI clients and provincial income assistance clients as one population of unemployed whose needs to reattach to the labour market are similar.

BC Benefits Programs

Eligibility for BC Benefits depends on an individual's or family's income and assets. Applicants are expected to use all other sources of income and assets before qualifying and, with some exceptions, recipients of income assistance and youth allowances must either be actively searching for employment or be participating in an approved employment-related program.

The ministry looks at several criteria – age, employability, disability, family size – to determine which of the ministry's assistance programs are most appropriate for the individual or family. Each program is designed to meet the needs of particular types of applicants or particular situations.

Income Support Programs

Income Assistance – provides support (see the rate table on page 10) to individuals and their dependants who are:

- aged 25 to 59 years
- aged 60 to 64 years,
- aged 65 years or older,
- aged less than 19 years and living away from home, and
- aged less than 19 years and living in the home of a relative.

Those aged 25 to 59 years must participate in programs designed to help them return to the workforce. The exceptions are those with special needs such as people in a treatment program or with a medical condition; or single parents with a child under seven years old or a child who has a mental or physical disability. There are no eligibility requirements regarding employment for those aged 60 years or older.

Income Support for Persons with Disabilities – is provided to those designated as persons with disabilities who are 18 years or older. Once designated, an individual retains the Disability Benefits designation. However, benefits (see the rate table on page 10) are based on the recipient's ongoing financial need.

Youth Works – living allowances are provided to those aged 19 to 24 years who participate in job search and employment training. The same exceptions apply to this age group as those aged 25 to 59 years.

Training programs which recipients are required to take – Youth Works for those aged 19 to 24 years and Welfare to Work programs for those aged 25 to 59 years – are provided without charge by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology. Other income assistance recipients, except those 65 years or older, have the option to take Welfare to Work training.

Hardship Assistance – is provided to those who do not meet the criteria for regular income assistance but are experiencing undue hardship, for example, people who are awaiting Employment Insurance, Workers' Compensation, pension or other income; are unable to meet citizenship requirements; or are out of work because of a strike or lockout. In many cases, the support provided must be repaid.

Supplementary Allowances – are provided to income assistance recipients

beyond the regular assistance rates to help with the costs of:

- burial and cremation,
- bus passes
- camp fees
- Christmas
- clothing/comforts for those in special care facilities,
- Cooperative Housing Association share purchase,
- dealing with an unexpected crisis
- raising children through a Family Bonus Top-up benefit,
- guide dog allowances
- losing a benefit cheque that was not yet endorsed,
- a necessary move,
- sending children back to school,
- security deposits for rental accommodation,
- entering the workforce (workclothes, transportation),
- attending a child protection or family maintenance hearing.

Administered Benefits and Services – provide payments to community-based support services which complement ministry programs. They include:

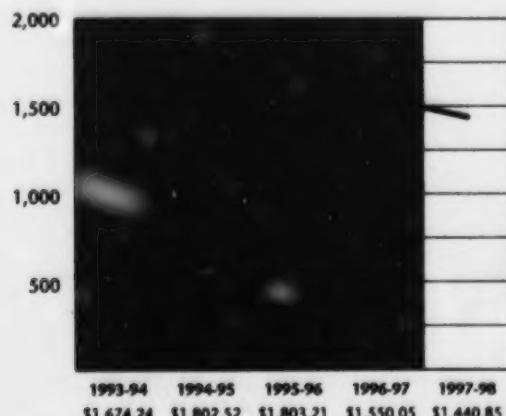
- user fees for residential alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs paid directly to facilities,
- non-residential alcohol and drug counselling services for income assistance recipients,
- helping income assistance recipients unable to enter employment to participate in a community volunteer program,
- costs for obtaining family maintenance orders, including legal fees, paternity blood testing and necessary transportation,
- short-term homemaker services in emergency situations,
- hostel or emergency accommodation for persons without other resources,
- the costs of obtaining identification documents,
- translation services for applicants who do not speak English,
- peer counselling for seniors,
- assistance for expenses of Disability Benefits recipients related to a volunteer work experience program,
- user fees for continuing care and mental health residential care programs.

BC Benefit Income Support Rates, Effective August 1997

Family Size ³	Employable/ Temporarily excused	Disability Benefits Level I ¹ or Age 60-64	Single Parents (non Disability Benefits)	Disability Benefits Level II ² or Seniors
Single	\$500	\$596	N/A	\$771 ⁴
Single (age 55-59)	\$546	\$596	N/A	\$771
Two persons	\$811	\$953	\$879	\$1,128 ⁵
Couple (age 55-59)	\$903	\$953	N/A	\$1,128
Three persons	\$993	\$1,043	\$969	\$1,218
Four persons	\$1,033	\$1,083	\$1,009	\$1,258
Five persons	\$1,083	\$1,133	\$1,059	\$1,308
Six persons	\$1,113	\$1,163	\$1,089	\$1,338
Seven persons	\$1,143	\$1,193	\$1,119	\$1,368
Eight persons or more	add \$20 for for each person	add \$20 for each person	add \$20 for each person	add \$20 for each person

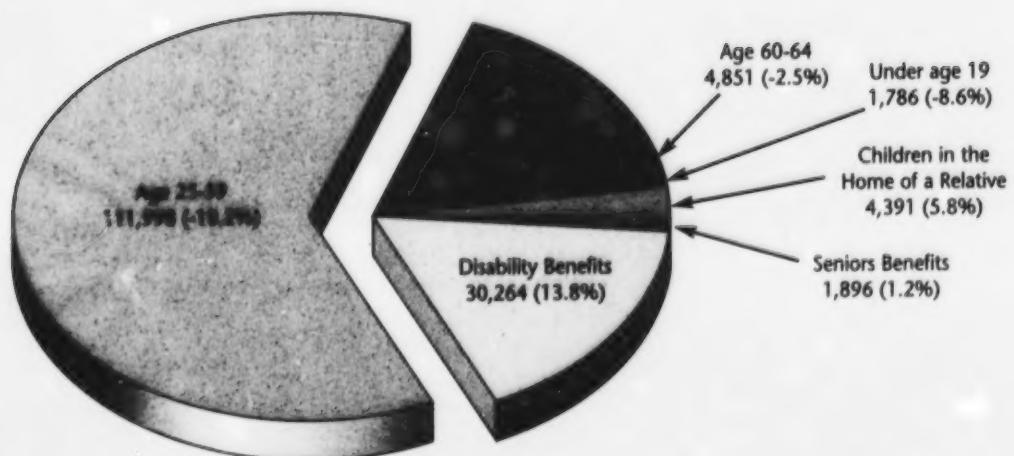
1. Disability Benefits Level I designation under the BC Benefits Act is given to applicants with temporary disabilities.
2. Disability Benefits Level II designation under the *Disability Benefits Program Act* is given to applicants with severe, permanent disabilities that require unusual and continuous monthly expenditures for unusual but essential continuous needs.
3. BC Family Bonus - These rates reflect a transfer of income support from BC Benefits to the BC Family Bonus which provides up to \$103 per month per child based on income whether from work or from BC Benefits. Consequently, for families of three or more, these rates are \$103 per child lower than the rates prior to August 1996.
4. Single parents designated Disability Benefits Level II receive an additional \$175 per month.
5. Couples and two-parent families where two members are eligible for Disability Benefits Level II or Seniors Benefits receive an additional \$175 per month.

Income Support Expenditures 1993-94 to 1997-98 (millions)

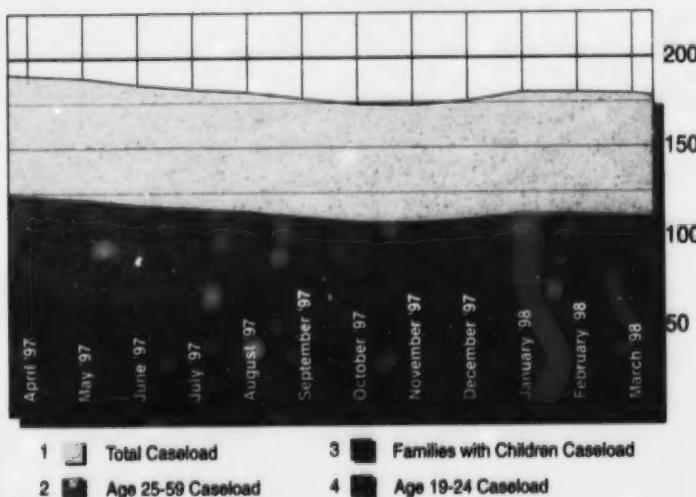


Income Support Caseload
March 1998
Number of cases (Percent change over March 1997)

Total = 179,704 (-6.0%)



Income Support Caseload (000s)
January 1996 to March 1997



Note: The graph above details total caseload (1) and selected parts of the caseload (2,3, and 4). It does not detail all parts of the caseload and there is overlap between the two age categories and the caseload of families with children.

Income Support for People with Disabilities

Since the introduction of a new broader definition of 'disability' in January 1996, the number of benefits cases has grown 30.8 per cent to 30,264 in March 1998. During 1997-98, a designation for those with temporary disabilities was developed under the BC Benefits Acts, Disability Benefits Level I. Those with permanent disabilities receive Disability Benefits Level II under the *Disability Benefits Program Act*. The graph below shows the caseload for Disability Benefits Level II only. Level II benefits expenditures for 1997-98 totalled \$245.27 million.



Disability Benefits Caseload (000s)
January 1997 to March 1998



Seniors Benefits

Benefits are provided to seniors to meet their everyday needs and maintain their independence and dignity. In March 1998, 1,896 seniors received this benefit compared with 1,874 in March 1997.

Hardship Assistance

In October 1995, the hardship caseload was 23,787 and represented 11 per cent of the income assistance caseload. By February 1998, the hardship caseload had declined to 14,659 or about 8.1 per cent of the income assistance caseload. This reduction resulted from improvements in the determination of eligibility, an initiative that began in the previous fiscal year.

During 1997-98, hardship assistance was separated from income assistance in the ministry budget to improve monitoring and management of these expenditures. Net expenditures for 1997-98, after recoveries of repayable benefits, totalled \$73.66 million.

Supplemental Allowances – Expenditures (millions)

	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	Rates (applicable during 1997-98)
Crisis Grants	\$22.4	\$26.0	\$18.0	\$13.4	\$12.6	No set rate
Christmas Allowance	9.5	9.9	10.5	9.3	8.6	\$35/single, \$70/couple, \$10/child
School Start-up	3.2	3.4	3.7	3.7	3.2	\$42/students 5-11, \$58/students 12+
Repatriation	0.11	0.14	0.21	0.2	0.17	No set rate
Camp Fees	0.80	0.87	0.68	0.67	0.62	No set rate
Diet	1.5	1.7	2.0	3.8	4.8	\$50/month maximum
Natal Allowance	1.5	1.6	1.9	1.97	1.8	\$35/mo., up to \$70/mo.
Comfort Allowance	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	\$82/mo.
Burials	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.96	2.1	\$917 for adult, \$690 for children
Guide Dog	0.027	0.37	0.39	0.39	0.037	\$62/month

Family Maintenance

Ministry family maintenance workers help income assistance recipients to obtain maintenance from former spouses. Amendments to BC Benefits legislation came into force in September 1997 authorizing the ministry to take a more proactive role in obtaining maintenance orders on behalf of single parents enrolled in the program. This provides a secure income and allows some participants to leave welfare. In the next phase of the initiative, expected in 1999, maintenance will be paid directly to government and passed on to income support clients as part of their monthly assistance (with \$100 of maintenance—\$50 for singles—remaining exempt). Assignment of maintenance rights and payments will be a condition of eligibility for assistance. The amendments introduced during 1997-98 produced savings estimated at \$1.6 million. Once fully

implemented, the assignment of maintenance is expected to save \$15.9 million each year.

In May 1997, the federal government introduced new Child Support Guidelines under the federal *Divorce Act* to help parents, lawyers and judges set consistent child support orders. The ministry's family maintenance workers were to begin using these guidelines in 1998-99 to help income assistance recipients to obtain reasonable maintenance orders.

At the end of 1997-98, almost 8,000 families on welfare were enrolled in the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program. However, during the year an average of more than 47,000 single parents received assistance each month: about 12,000 of them declared maintenance income in a given month. The objective of the Family Maintenance Program and the new initiatives is to ensure that when families break up, parents still fulfill their responsibility to support their children. During 1997, 3,311 new orders were obtained against delinquent parents. The annual number of new orders has tripled since 1993-94.

Adult Residential Care

The ministry paid \$24.3 million to alcohol and drug treatment facilities and long-term care facilities on behalf of income assistance recipients and to income assistance recipients directly during 1997-98.

Temporary Accommodation

The ministry paid emergency shelters \$12.4 million during 1997-98 for room and board for transient income assistance recipients or others who were in crisis and required accommodation. In all, there are 34 hostels with a total contracted capacity of 607 beds and seven shelters for accommodating families with a capacity of 96 beds. These resources are located in 26 communities throughout B.C. Annual occupancy rates range between 25 and 100 per cent.

During 1997-98, the ministry set new service standards for hostels to help clients seek permanent accommodation, labour market attachment and community services as needed. The new service standards include telephone access for local calls and access to a newspaper and community referral information. The ministry meets with five other ministries which also provide special needs housing (Employment and Investment, Health, Children and Families, Women's Equality and Attorney General) to ensure the most efficient and effective use of provincial resources.

Field Services and Program Operations

Field Services delivers income support programs and services through 138 district offices and a number of visiting offices in nine regions throughout the province. Income support programs are delivered under the authority of the BC Benefits (income Assistance) Act, the BC Benefits (Youth Works) Act, the BC Benefits (Child Care) Act, the BC Benefits (Appeals) Act, the Disability Programs Act, the Financial Administration Act, and the corresponding regulations for each.

Each of the nine regions is managed by a regional executive officer (REO) who is responsible for the overall accountability and successful delivery of the BC Benefits program in the region. The REO provides leadership and direction in the management of staff, contracted services, financial and physical resources, and in the resolution of operational priorities and issues. The REO reports directly to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Field Services and Program Operations.

Program Operations supports the work of Field Services through the Labour Market Attachment Branch, the Health Services Branch, the Prevention, Compliance and Enforcement Branch, and the Emergency Social Services Branch. Each branch has its own distinct mandate and reports to the Executive Director of Program Operations.

The Labour Market Attachment Branch provides information and advice to the ministry's executive on matters pertaining to the implementation of the Labour Market Development Agreement, and is responsible for the development of new programming to support ministry clients returning to the labour market.

The Health Services Branch provides eligible clients with Ministry of Health medical coverage, optical and dental services, and essential medical equipment and supplies. The branch has responsibility for reviewing applications and approving benefits for both permanent and temporary disability designations.

The Prevention, Compliance and Enforcement Branch works in partnership with other ministry staff in pursuing a balance between prevention and enforcement to ensure compliance with the BC Benefits legislation.

The Emergency Social Services Branch is part of the Provincial Emergency Program and coordinates the work of over 5,500 volunteers in 120 communities across British Columbia. In the event of a disaster, ESS provides emergency goods and services for those people affected. It is also responsible for developing plans to ensure continuity of ministry operations throughout and following a disaster.

Labour Market Attachment

The Labour Market Attachment Branch is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) by the Ministry of Human Resources with the goal of maximizing client participation and ministry cost savings.

The branch also provides support to other ministries and organizations in development and implementation of initiatives related to labour market attachment for BC Benefits clients.

Objective: *To support the ministry executive and field services with the implementation of the LMDA.*

Strategy: The branch provides information and advice to the ministry executive on matters pertaining to the LMDA and ensures issues raised by the field are dealt with in an efficient manner.

Results: The ministry was an active participant in the implementation of the LMDA during 1997-98. This included the review of 58,000 client files and the referral of 25,000 clients to Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) programs and services. The clients who were referred to HRDC received approximately \$66 million in federally funded programs and services. The provision of these services was expected to result in significant savings to the provincial income assistance account in 1998-99.

Objective: *To ensure the needs of ministry clients are reflected during the implementation of the LMDA.*

Strategy: The branch is the ministry's official liaison to the LMDA Secretariat. The LMDA Secretariat ensures Management Committee directions are implemented, oversees the activities of working groups, undertakes issues management and coordinates Management Committee meetings. Branch staff also represent the ministry on all LMDA working groups and a number of individual working committees.

Results: The needs of ministry clients are always at the forefront during the decision-making process.

Objective: *To monitor and track the impact of the LMDA on the BC Benefits caseload.*

Strategy: The branch has worked with other branches within the ministry and with HRDC to develop reporting and tracking mechanisms to monitor the results of all activities related to LMDA.

Results: The ministry is able to track the activity and financial savings resulting from LMDA activities. It was anticipated that the federal expenditures on programs and services for income assistance recipients will result in provincial income assistance savings.

Objective: *To assist in the development and implementation of projects related to labour market attachment for BC Benefits clients.*

Strategy: The branch was involved in the development of the 'Jobs First' initiative, implemented the Workplace-Based Training Liaison Project and also provided advice as requested to other ministries and organizations.

Results: The development of new labour market attachment programs for BC Benefits clients, the implementation of initiatives to maximize the referral of clients to employment programs, and the modification of current initiatives to better address client needs will result in clients finding employment more quickly and staying attached to the labour market for greater lengths of time. This will result in increased cost savings in income assistance.

Health Services

The Health Services Branch provides access for eligible recipients and their families to Ministry of Health medical coverage through the Medical Services Plan program, optical and dental services, essential medical equipment and supplies, and other medically necessary services to eligible persons in need. It also reviews applications and approves benefits for the permanent disability designation under the *Disability Benefits Program Act* (Disability Benefits Level II) and for a temporary designation under the *BC Benefits Act* (Disability Benefits Level I).

Objective: *To consult, develop and implement a new, broader response to the needs of clients with short-term disabilities who were being denied benefits due to the short-term nature of their disability.*

Strategy: Working with advocacy and community groups, a more responsive benefit program was developed, Disability Benefits Level I, for applicants with short-term disabilities. Changes in the application process allow for approval of benefits in this temporary category.

Results: Since its inception, 9,700 clients have been approved for this benefit level and were able to receive a higher BC Benefit rate as a result.

Objective: *To develop effective community training on the role of the Health Services Branch within the context of the income support programs within the community.*

Strategy: Field training for ministry staff around the province was implemented using experienced training organizations to present health-related materials.

Results: Eleven sessions were held in nine regions of the ministry, with 275 ministry staff attending.

Objective: *To improve client services through the integration of improved technology and by a reorganization of human resource support at the Health Services Branch.*

Strategy: The branch decided to move from a program model of service delivery to a case management model, incorporating improved computer technology to support provision of individualized benefits.

Results: New model planning, development and training were completed during 1997-98 and the new model was ready for implementation as of April 1, 1998.

Prevention, Compliance and Enforcement

The Prevention, Compliance and Enforcement (PCE) Branch is dedicated to working in partnership with other ministry staff in pursuing a balance between prevention and enforcement to ensure a high level of compliance with the *BC Benefits Acts* and the *Disability Benefits Program Act and Regulations*.

The PCE Branch was established in 1994 to combat fraud and abuse, and to increase public confidence in the BC Benefits support programs. The branch has three distinct components:

1. Prevention Program
2. Compliance Program
3. Enforcement Program

Staff Complement (FTEs)

The PCE Branch consists of a total staff complement of 147.67 FTEs: 29.01 for headquarters (including the Special Investigation Unit in New Westminster) and 118.66 for the PCE regional units throughout the province.

Prevention

Objective: *To prevent and deter fraud and abuse, in a proactive manner, by introducing activities and controls designed to ensure that an individual or group is unable to follow through on any intention to commit fraud because of the checks and balances built into the eligibility determination process.*

The Prevention Program consists of three elements:

- The Early Detection and Prevention (EDP) Program;
- Information Sharing (Data Matching); and
- Prevention of Unwarranted Expenditures Related to Federal Programs.

Strategy: The EDP program is committed to the detection and prevention of fraud, by conducting pre-eligibility reviews for selected categories of high-risk clients during the application process. The verification process ensures that assistance is only paid to eligible applicants. The EDP program was introduced in 1996 and has since expanded to include 79 verification officers working out of 40 district offices.

Results: This program resulted in \$16.1 million in savings for the ministry in this fiscal year.

Strategy: Data matching is the process of comparing the names of recipients receiving ministry assistance against clients' names held by federal or provincial governments, ministries or agencies.

The objectives of data matching are to identify all persons who:

- are claiming duplicate benefits for which they are not entitled;

- are not declaring other sources of income; or
- are eligible for benefits from other federal or provincial benefit programs.

Regular monthly data matches are conducted with Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba Social Services agencies. Other matches under development will identify ministry clients who are also receiving student loans.

Prevention program savings

EDP	\$16,135,000
Data Matching	\$245,000
Warrant disentitlement	\$1,022,000
Fraud Disqualification	\$372,000
Total	\$17,774,000

Compliance

Objective: *To maintain public confidence in the BC Benefits program by ensuring that scarce ministry resources are directed to individuals and families who are truly in need.*

Compliance work is carried out by 27 eligibility officers (EOs) who review specific aspects of the BC Benefits support programs that are susceptible to fraud and error.

Strategy: The EOs reviewed 4,686 cases of persons with disabilities with known CPP contributions who were not receiving CPP income and assisted these persons to make application for federal benefits.

Results: The ministry adjusted the level of benefits for clients who qualified for federal CPP benefits, which resulted in savings for the ministry of \$10,025,000.

Strategy: PCE employed 18 university co-op students to carry out residency and identification checks on primarily employable clients living in the Lower Mainland and Victoria. The students visited 6,838 clients which resulted in 1,755 (26 per cent) case closures or ongoing reductions in benefits and 625 referrals for further investigation.

Results: Savings to the ministry are projected at \$5.7 million.

Compliance program savings

CPP - Phase 3 and 4	\$10,000,000
Summer Compliance Program	\$5,670,000
Other Initiatives	\$4,992,000
Total	\$20,662,000

Enforcement

Objective: *To reduce the incidence of fraud over time by proactively investigating and prosecuting offenders.*

Strategy: The enforcement component of the PCE Branch consists of 40 Ministry Investigators (MIs) and 31 Assistant Ministry Investigators (AMIs). Investigations are prioritized by the type of offence and the dollar amount of the fraud.

Results: Out of 12,474 cases investigated this fiscal year, 310 investigations were completed where the fraud amount was in excess of \$10,000. Examples of investigations follow.

Enforcement program savings

Benefits stopped	\$2,189,000
Repayment	\$14,049,000
Compensation	\$1,966,000
Total	\$18,204,000

Total PCE savings, 1997-98

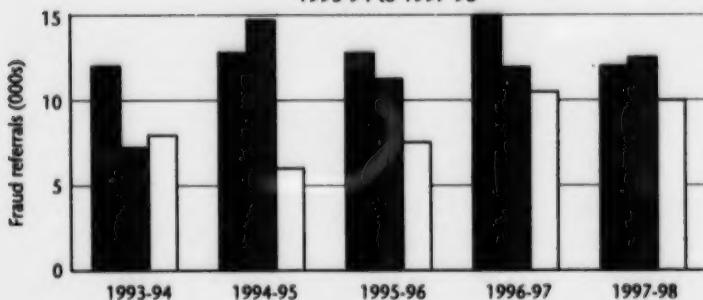
Prevention (from page 17)	\$17,774,000
Compliance (from page 17)	\$20,662,000
Enforcement (above)	\$18,204,000
Total	\$56,640,000

Fraud referrals by type, 1998

Duplicate assistance	263
False identification	155
False address	750
	<hr/>
Total	1,168
Undeclared income	6,836
Undeclared assets	283
	<hr/>
Total	7,119
Dependent status	574
Common-law	791
Lost/stolen cheques	987
Miscellaneous	1,309
Assisted—Out of province	15
	<hr/>
Total	3,676

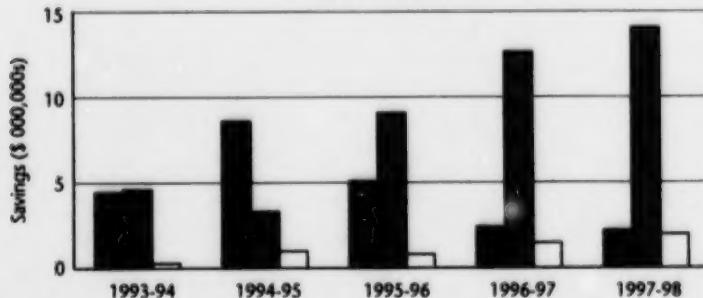
Fraud Referrals 1993-94 to 1997-98

- Cases opened
- Cases closed
- Case outstanding



Value of Savings through Investigation 1993-94 to 1997-98

- Benefits stopped
- Repayment taken
- Compensation order



Emergency Social Services

Emergency Social Services (ESS) provides shelter, food, clothing, registration and inquiry, and personal services to those forced from their homes by natural or man-made emergencies such as fires, earthquakes and floods. More than 5,000 ESS volunteers provide these services in more than 120 communities across British Columbia. The ESS branch supports the volunteers both directly and indirectly through public and private sector partnerships. The ESS branch is also responsible for business continuity planning to ensure ministry operations can continue following a disaster.

Although there were no large single incidents involving ESS during 1997-98, about 2,450 persons were assisted by ESS volunteers in 248 separate events - primarily house and apartment fires and localized floods. The largest event was an evacuation of 220 persons in Esquimalt as a result of a Russian trawler burning in dry dock. ESS volunteers from three separate municipalities responded with coordination assistance from the ESS branch of the ministry. Due to toxic smoke generated by the fire, this event came close to causing a major evacuation of the whole harbour area.

Objective: *To monitor the effectiveness of the Provincial Emergency Social Services Response Plan*

Strategy: In January 1998, the Province ran the Thunderbird III exercise - based on simulated ash fall over the Fraser Valley following a volcanic eruption of Mount Baker - as a test of the overall provincial emergency response plan. The provincial ESS response plan was tested as part of this exercise. This proved to be a very difficult scenario involving road closures, major flooding, communications and hydro failures, roof collapses and the inability to operate equipment.

Results: The provincial ESS response plan worked very well and important lessons were learned. The Provincial ESS Support Team, which is a partnership of government and non-government agencies, provides provincial level support for major disasters. As part of Thunderbird III, the ministry also formed a regional ESS support team which provided a strong communication linkage between the province and affected municipal ESS teams. This approach worked well and may be considered in future plans. The addition of regional Mobile Support Teams (i.e., highly trained ESS volunteers willing to provide ESS support to any B.C. community in need) also proved invaluable in assisting a community overwhelmed by a disaster.

Objective: *To ensure ESS volunteers are trained and ready to respond to disasters in their own communities.*

Strategy: ESS works in partnership with the Justice Institute to provide ESS training to volunteers throughout the province. During 1997-98, a 'Train the Trainer' Program was developed and 22 volunteer regional trainers were equipped with the necessary skills and training packages to provide instruction to community volunteers.

Results: In the first year, 53 training sessions were conducted throughout BC by volunteer regional trainers and all sessions were rated positively by volunteers who participated.

Objective: *To provide emergency communications links for ESS volunteers throughout the province, enabling them to relay critical information about emergency situations.*

Strategy: Municipal ESS teams are linked to the provincial ESS operations centre through an emergency communication system known as the digital amateur radio system or packet radio. To facilitate access to the ESS packet radio, surplus government computer equipment has been made available to communities (with assistance from the Westcoast Amateur Radio Club).

Results: More than 100 computers have been provided on a no-cost lease basis to help connect more than 50 communities to the ESS emergency communications system.



Policy and Research

The Policy and Research Division supports ministry executive and field services by providing professional planning, policy development, research and analysis, forecasting and evaluation services. It also develops and co-ordinates legislation and regulations for all the ministry's income support programs and co-ordinates the ministry's appeal processes.

Performance Measurement and Management Information

The Performance Measurement and Management Information Branch collects, maintains and ensures consistency of research information and statistics necessary for the effective monitoring and analysis of ministry programs and their success. The branch consists of three units: the Performance Measurement Unit, the Forecasting and Evaluation Unit and the Information Management Unit.

The Performance Measurement Unit (with one staff member at the beginning of the year) began distributing performance measures to field offices and regions in 1997-98. The measures were modified over the course of the year in order to better meet the needs of users and by the end of the year, measures on the effectiveness of the verification officers, on new starts, stops and cycling, and participation in training programs were being distributed.

The Information Management Unit directly provided a consistent source of caseload and expenditure information from a broad range of data sources to all areas of the ministry, other ministries and the general public. During 1997-98, the unit developed several new monitoring reports and several new tools including an intranet web site that allows the electronic distribution of their reports and documents.

Planning

The Planning Branch provides professional planning, policy and analytical services to the ministry. During 1997-98 year, this was accomplished through:

- development and coordination of the ministry's legislation and regulations.
- co-ordination of the development process of the ministry's strategic plan, including the Strategic Plan Framework document in November 1997; and
- development and recommendations for approval of income assistance support policy.

The branch also managed the ministry's environmental scan process by performing social impact analyses as required by the *Environmental Assessment Act* and as needed to assist the ministry in its general planning function.

Income Support Branch

The Income Support Branch provides research and policy development for all the ministry's income support programs. It also co-ordinates and manages the ministry's appeal processes.

Research and Policy Development:

During 1997-98, the Income Support Branch worked closely with other branches and divisions in the ministry to align policy initiatives and changes with the ministry's strategic goals. Some key policy initiatives during this period included:

- Changes to the Family Maintenance Program: to make the assignment of maintenance a condition of eligibility and to ensure that orders are obtained and enforced through the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program. This change ensures that parents, and not the taxpayer, bear the primary responsibility for the financial support of their children.
- Changes to identification as an eligibility criterion: to allow families with children access to regular assistance so long as the applicant had obtained the required identification documents. Previously, only hardship assistance was available until all members of the household had complete identification.
- Changes to treatment of security deposits: to allow clients the same rights and responsibilities as other tenants by issuing them security deposits directly which are repayable to the client when he or she moves. Previously, landlords were required to repay security deposits to the ministry.
- Periods of ineligibility: It was not previously spelled out how long an individual was to remain ineligible after being declared ineligible—for example, for disposing of assets improperly, quitting employment or failing to seek employment. Changes to policy specified the time period of ineligibility in each case.
- Revision (and reduction) of the ministry's policy manual: to decentralize and reduce bureaucratic decision-making.

Appeals

A decision to refuse, reduce or discontinue BC Benefits or assistance is open to review through the ministry's formal appeal process.

The ministry has a three-tiered appeal system. The first level involves an internal reconsideration of the initial eligibility decision made by the ministry. A designated manager in each region reconsiders the initial decision.

The second level involves the creation of a lay tribunal. The applicant or recipient chooses one nominee, the second is selected by the ministry and the two nominees select a chairperson from a published list.

The third level involves an appeal to the BC Benefits Appeal Board. This board reviews tribunal decisions to determine whether there was an error of law or a jurisdictional error.

The following are highlights of the branch's appeal activity during this period.

- In 1997-98, the ministry reviewed 3,731 eligibility decisions. Of these, 3007 decisions were upheld and 724 were overturned in favor of the applicant or recipient.
- Of the 3,007 eligibility decisions upheld, 628 decisions were appealed to lay tribunal hearings constituted in local communities across the province. Of these, 265 tribunals upheld the original ministry decision while 363 decisions were overturned in favor of the client.
- The BC Benefits Appeal Board, an autonomous body reporting to the minister, maintains its own statistics based on a calendar year rather than a fiscal year. It reported that 236 appeals were registered in 1997 of which 103 were decided in the client's favour and 86 upheld the ministry decision. Six other appeals were declined because they were registered after the legislated deadline, five tribunal decisions were made void, three appeals were determined to be frivolous and 21 appeals were withdrawn.



Communications

The Communications Branch supports programs and initiatives of the ministry by providing central communications planning, media relations and issues management, and by developing and distributing information to clients, advocacy groups and the general public.

During 1997-98, the branch provided communications support for:

- the signing and introduction of the Labour Market Development Agreement between the federal and provincial governments to assist British Columbians in entering and staying in the labour market;
- the amendment to BC Benefits legislation which allows government to assist individuals and single parents who are applying for income assistance to obtain and manage family maintenance orders; and
- the preparation of materials and information to launch the National Child Benefit program in British Columbia in July 1998.

The branch developed information packages for:

- clients and landlords informing them of changes in the way security deposit repayment is managed. Clients were made responsible for repayment of security deposits paid on their behalf when moving into new accommodation;
- the general public on progress towards the development of the National Child Benefit and British Columbia's leadership role in the federal/provincial/ territorial program;
- the introduction and implementation of the Disability Benefits I category under the BC Benefits Acts. The new category recognizes the needs of clients with short-term disabilities; and
- the continued implementation of data matching initiatives with the federal government, other provincial governments and agencies, to ensure that all applicants and clients are aware that the ministry reviews application information for accuracy.

The branch expanded avenues of access to information by:

- posting the BC Benefits policy manual on the Web site to allow full and instant access to the ministry's policies and policy amendments; and
- continuing to update all ministry information publications to reflect the creation of the Ministry of Human Resources in September 1996.

The branch provided media relations and issues management for:

- the continuing effort to ensure that applicants for income assistance explore all sources of income and declare all income to the ministry; and
- BC Benefits caseload statistics.

The Communications Branch also organized and executed special events, drafted speaking notes and ministerial statements, arranged media events and interviews, produced fact sheets and information sheets for letters to clients, and planned advertising.

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services Branch supports the deputy minister and Executive Committee by managing key ministry issues. This includes preparing and reviewing briefing materials, reviewing ministerial correspondence, tracking issues, conducting research and managing special projects. The branch acts as a final quality control point for all ministerial and deputy ministerial briefing materials and correspondence. The branch is also responsible for managing freedom of information requests, and providing advice, policy development, leadership and issues management on issues that need to be addressed at the federal/provincial/territorial level.

The Corporate Services Branch has four components;

- the Correspondence unit,
- the Client Call unit,
- the Information and Privacy office, and
- the Intergovernmental Relations office.

Intergovernmental Relations

IGR supports and undertakes federal/provincial negotiations on particular issues and works closely with other governments, ministries and agencies to act on national social policy priorities. These include initiatives led by the Ministry of Human Resources and issues led by other ministries which may impact this ministry. It represents the ministry on various federal/provincial/territorial committees and working groups and supports the deputy minister's role on the federal/provincial/territorial Deputy Ministers Responsible for Social Services Committee and the minister's role on the federal/provincial/territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services Committee.

Objective: *To work with other jurisdictions to implement the National Child Benefit.*

Strategy: B.C. worked to coordinate provincial implementation of the National Child Benefit (scheduled for July 1, 1998) through negotiations with the federal government and other provinces and territories. The goals of the benefit are to reduce the depth of child poverty and promote attachment to the labour market.

Results: B.C.'s experience in introducing the BC Family Bonus has been instrumental in guiding the implementation process for the National Child Benefit.

Objective: *To work with federal, provincial and territorial partners toward reform of disability income and supports.*

Strategy: As a member of the working group on benefits and services for Persons With Disabilities, B.C. assisted in the design of a framework on harmonization strategies. In addition, through the working group, B.C. participated in the development of the draft vision paper *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues* which is designed to establish a common framework for all jurisdictions to use in the development of policy on disability issues.

Information and Privacy Office

The Information and Privacy Office administers the ministry's responsibilities under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. The office ensures that the ministry is in full compliance with the legislated standards for the protection of privacy of personal information in its custody, and with the provisions for access to records held by the ministry, including an individual's personal information. The major activity of the office is the management of formal requests for access to information.

Objective: *To bring the ministry into compliance with legislated time frames for response to information requests.*

Strategy: The branch introduced a number of efficiency measures designed to facilitate response to information requests.

Results: More than 600 requests for information were processed during 1997-98, an increase of almost 10 per cent over the previous year. Due to the continued rise in the volume of requests, the ministry was not able to meet the legislated time frames. However, the size of the backlog of requests was reduced.

Objective: *To ensure that the protection of privacy and information access policies and requirements under the Act are fully integrated into all aspects of ministry operations.*

Strategy: The office was involved in the revision of the BC Benefits application form and other regulatory and policy initiatives of the ministry. Staff worked on the development and implementation of various information-sharing agreements. The office participated in the investigation and resolution of privacy complaints and represented the ministry in reviews and other matters involving the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Client Call Unit

The Client Call Unit responds to public inquiries and client specific concerns about ministry programs, providing general information and referrals to appropriate resources. A high volume of diverse calls are referred to this unit from the minister's office, Enquiry BC, the Premier's Office, other ministries and agencies. The majority of calls deal with issues of extreme sensitivity and responses must be timely and confidential.

Since its inception in April 1995, the unit has responded to 7288 calls to the end of March 1998. The number of calls in 1997-98 totalled 3,701, averaging 308 calls per month. The number of calls reflects the changes in policy, seasonal issues, changes in service delivery models as well as service quality issues.

Efforts are aimed at resolving callers' issues and concerns at the local level where services are delivered, in a fair and timely manner.

Correspondence Unit

The Correspondence Unit is responsible for planning, developing, maintaining and monitoring policies, standards, systems and services for the management of ministerial correspondence across the ministry. The unit coordinates a variety of correspondence resource materials, reports to the executive council on trends, performances and related issues, and ensures the overall quality and effectiveness of correspondence coordination. Approximately 1,800 letters were logged during 1997-98.

Finance and Management Services

Financial Services

The Financial Services Branch performs the ministry's financial and accounting functions. These include administrative and program payments, payroll, reconciliation of transactions and revenue collection. The branch operates from headquarters offices in Vancouver and Victoria.

During 1997-98, the branch processed on average each month about:

- 327,000 income assistance payments (including direct payments to suppliers such as landlords and Hydro on behalf of clients),
- 22,000 billings from day care providers,
- 1,200 payments to contractors, and
- paycheques for 2,734 regular and auxiliary staff.

Objective: *To enable timely and efficient issue of purchase authorizations to ministry clients while increasing financial control over their use.*

Strategy: Previously, purchase authorizations were issued manually by individual financial assistance workers, often without proper recording of data. An online purchase authorization system was developed and installed to ensure funds are properly tracked and transactions recorded on case files.

Results: Introduction of the online system decreased staff workload and improved control over expenditures.

Objective: *To streamline purchasing for ministry staff by eliminating needless paperwork.*

Strategy: The ministry adopted a government-wide initiative undertaken through the Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations to issue purchasing cards to key government staff, replacing the need for purchase authorizations and purchase orders. Purchasing cards are credit cards for which purchases are charged to a specific branch account.

Results: Purchasing has been simplified for staff making purchases on behalf of the ministry and for financial services staff who monitor purchasing, without loss of financial control.

Budgets and Financial Planning

The Budgets and Financial Planning Branch is primarily responsible for coordinating the compilation and monitoring of the ministry's budget, developing financial planning strategies to meet ministry financial goals, and establishing and managing effective financial and FTE reporting systems.

1997-98 Full-Time Equivalent Allocation

1	Ministry staff provide information technology services to the Ministry for Children and Families with the proportionate number of FTEs charged to that ministry and credited to the Ministry of Human Resources.	Minister's Office –	6.00
2	The Ministry of Human Resources (MHR) distributes child care subsidies on behalf of the Ministry for Children and Families (MCF) with the proportionate number of FTEs charged to MCF and credited to MHR.	Headquarters –	573.08
3	Work under the new Labour Market Development Agreement began after the 'Blue Book' FTE estimates were established at the beginning of the fiscal year. Subtracting these additions to ministry FTEs during the year reconciles the actual FTEs to the original estimates of 2272 in the 'Blue Book'.	BC Benefits Appeal Board	3.50
		Deputy Minister's Office/Corporate Services	20.15
		Communications	11.83
		Finance & Management Services Division:	
		Assistant Deputy Minister	2.42
		Financial Services Branch	118.13
		Budgets and Financial Planning Branch	10.18
		Administrative Services Branch	15.19
		Personnel Services Branch	47.01
		Information Technology Branch	180.55
		Chargeback - Information Technology ¹	(75.00)
		Policy and Research Division:	
		Assistant Deputy Minister	2.86
		Income Assistance Branch	32.25
		Planning Branch	3.00
		Research Branch	12.73
		Administrative Support	4.00
		Field Services and Program Operations Division:	
		Assistant Deputy Minister	9.19
		Health Services Branch	36.76
		Prevention Compliance and Enforcement Branch:	
		Headquarters	22.62
		Field	118.66
		Summer Compliance Project	6.38
		Labour Market Attachment Branch	4.67
		Emergency Social Services Unit	4.00
		Chargeback - Child Care Subsidy Program ²	(18.0)
		Regional Services –	1,735.59
		Vancouver	339.88
		Rainbow	177.24
		Fraser North/Upper Valley	223.00
		South Fraser	202.78
		The Kootenays & Okanagan	180.37
		South Central Interior	171.12
		Prince George and the North	167.17
		Greater Vancouver Island	204.40
		Garden City	152.26
		After Hours	9.90
		Training	27.47
		Chargeback - Child Care Subsidy Program ²	(120.00)
		Total –	2,314.67
		Less LMDA ³	42.67
		Ministry FTE Allocation	2,272.00

Administrative Services

The branch coordinates ministry mail service, manages the ministry's assets (equipment, vehicles and furniture) and coordinates classification, retention, storage, retrieval and final disposition of ministry records. The branch coordinates provision of office space for the ministry, and ensures that both internal and external provincial government customers have access to the most current telephone numbers and office locations for all Ministry of Human Resources employees.

Objective: *To focus the new Administrative Services Branch within the Ministry of Human Resources towards a one-stop shopping concept for service delivery and by decentralizing certain functions and budget to align with the ministry direction of accountability within each region.*

Strategy: Branch staff consulted with Financial Services Branch staff and field staff on decentralization of regional postal charges and regional copiers, and implemented the one-stop service concept.

Results: A plan was prepared to transfer budgets for postal charges and copiers to the regions to be implemented in April 1998. The Administrative Services Guide, outlining policies and procedures related to the services provided by the branch, was prepared and distributed to regional administrators at a meeting held at the Richmond training centre.

Objective: *To facilitate a consolidation of ministry headquarters facilities into the Belmont building in Victoria.*

Strategy: Space planning meetings were scheduled to gather the information required to identify space requirements and start the project.

Results: A plan was prepared which proposed consolidating branch locations in the Belmont building.

Information, Records and Forms Management

Objective: *To facilitate the closure of the Records Management units in Richmond and Victoria and to transfer the responsibility for welfare records (previously under the Ministry of Social Services) in off-site locations to the Ministry of Human Resources.*

Strategy: Regular meetings were scheduled between the Ministry for Children and Families, the Ministry of Human Resources, the Information Technology Branch and BC Information Management System staff to facilitate a process to identify and transfer case files from the Ministry for Children and Families to the Ministry of

Human Resources. Roles and responsibilities of the records management units were also transferred to the Records Team in the Ministry of Human Resources.

Results: All files and responsibilities were successfully transferred to the ministry. Several changes were recommended for the Management Information System and procedures to facilitate the transfer of client files to off-site storage were made for implementation in the following year.

Objective: *To transfer the ministry's Forms Management Unit to the government-wide Office Products Centre (OPC) and warehousing services.*

Strategy: Several planning sessions were held between ministries to ensure that the Ministry of Human Resources forms and negotiable instruments would be stocked and distributed in a timely and secure manner to ministry offices. A plan was developed and executed to supply forms to the central government facilities.

Results: Ministry offices are now ordering their forms and supplies from the Office Products Centre and warehousing services.

Objective: *To train ministry staff in Records and Forms Management policies and procedures.*

Strategy: A comprehensive training program was developed to enable staff to manage government records in an efficient and timely manner. Training in the field was started.

Results: The target is to have all staff complete the training by the end of the next fiscal year, resulting in improvements in record management and a reduction of the administrative costs of managing recorded information.

Objective: *To deliver and maintain efficient, cost-effective services in accordance with the government-wide office accommodation reduction initiative.*

Strategy: During 1997-98, the branch delivered and completed 17 Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) offices and 106 space adjustments, and managed 124 major renovations/moves and 164 minor tenant improvements. In consultation with BCBC, the branch worked to reduce the costs of tenant improvements and in turn the costs of ministry accommodation. For example, planned moves involved use of alternative workplace solutions such as open office design and modular fixtures. And development of integrated workplace strategies such as telecommuting and hotelling (use of unassigned work stations which are booked when needed by staff) during 1997-98 were expected to result in accommodation savings in the future.

Results: The costs of tenant improvements were reduced.

Telephone Data Administration

Objective: *To create and maintain information which updates the ministry's contact data, the web-based Government Telephone Directory and the annual printed BC Government Telephone Directory.*

Strategy: New procedures were introduced to help streamline the gathering, and to promote accuracy, of telephone information.

Results: The internal ministry directory has current ministry staff and office information. The government-wide web-based directory provides accurate and current information for the public and ministry staff that have access, as well as the printed BC Government Telephone Directory.



Personnel Services

The Personnel Services Branch ensures the appropriate application of legislation, collective agreements and progressive personnel practices to maximize staff resources; supports positive and progressive employee relations; ensures staff are well-trained; supports management and line staff in the pursuit of the ministry's mandate; and administers occupational health and safety programs.

The branch consists of nine regional offices and a headquarters office. There are full staff training facilities located in Richmond.

The branch provides service to 2,272 full time equivalents (FTEs) made up of 2,734 regular and auxiliary staff.

Objective: *To enhance workplace safety.*

Strategy: A comprehensive new safety manual was prepared and published and training was developed and delivered in the topic areas of safety in the workplace and violence prevention in the workplace.

Results: The training has ensured that the ministry is in compliance with existing Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) regulations. It has prepared the ministry for future changes in WCB regulations.

Objective: *To enhance workplace health.*

Strategy: Attendance management training, focused on reducing absences due to illness, was prepared and delivered to all regional supervisors by the branch.

Results: The training program was the preliminary stage in the development of a comprehensive health promotion program that is to be launched within the ministry in the following year.

Objective: *To support positive and progressive employee relations.*

Strategy: The Employee Relations unit prepared and published the handbook *A Practical Guide for Supervisors and Managers*. It is a resource guide to complement core supervisory training in the personnel responsibilities required of supervisors. Two training mini-modules were also developed and delivered to all personnel managers. These will be delivered to supervisors and managers, as required. The topics are performance correction and discipline. These modules expand on core training provided to all supervisors.

Results: The quality of and access to supervisory training has been enhanced.

Objective: *To ensure staff are properly classified and compensated for their job duties.*

Strategy: In support of the new Ministry of Human Resources, the classification unit was able to conclude negotiations successfully with external organizations such as PSERC and the union regarding position classification and exclusion issues, and headquarters and regional structures.

Results: Regional and headquarters structures have been successfully implemented.

Objective: *To ensure a high level of skills among employees.*

Strategy: Training was provided to all Level 1 and Level 2 designated investigators to ensure the ministry is able to address complaints of discrimination and harassment. Educational materials, including the video Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect, were created for ministry employees.

A training needs process was initiated and resulted in special project training for ministry staff on change processes. In support of ministry strategic and business plans, in-depth reviews of staff training delivery models and core training curriculum were conducted.

Results: Training reviews during the year resulted in development and improvement of training delivery and curriculum in the following fiscal year. Investigator training and the video have resulted in a heightened level of awareness on important issues among ministry staff.



Objective: *To hire required new staff who will be most appropriate for the job.*

Strategy: The ministry continued hiring into Financial Assistance Worker (FAW) positions using the 'knowledge, skills and ability' (KSA) approach. A major recruitment drive for the Lower Mainland included five Outreach Sessions jointly hosted by the ministry and Public Service Employee Relations Commission (PSERC). Approximately 80 agencies representing one or more of the designated groups were included at those sessions. The ministry also played a role in the early stages of the establishment of the PSERC Vancouver Recruitment Access Office.

Results: One hundred FAWs were hired. The PSERC Vancouver Recruitment Access Office was opened in the following fiscal year. The process was appeal-free.

Objective: *To ensure ministry staff are sensitive to the diverse character of ministry clientele and staff.*

Strategy: An electronic bulletin board was developed to provide information to employees on diversity issues. A policy statement on diversity was implemented. It stated that the ministry values and welcomes diversity in its staff and clients and is committed to building a work environment that is free from all forms of harassment and discrimination. Various diversity initiatives were implemented in partnership with the community agencies and organizations, including workshops on disability issues and Aboriginal, Vietnamese, South Asian and Iranian cultures.

Results: The ministry and its employees continued to establish effective working relationships, on an individual and organizational level, based on mutual understanding.

The ministry successfully implemented upgrades of the government-wide electronic personnel database and incorporated the system into the workplace.

Information Technology

The Information Technology Branch supports ministry program and service delivery through the management and use of information technology. The branch works closely with all ministry branches, divisions and regions to determine their systems requirements and project priorities. The branch develops systems budgets submissions, manages systems contracts and monitors the overall systems budget for the ministry.

The branch defines, designs and develops applications as required by the ministry and implements them through a quality assurance process. Documentation and training is provided for each implementation.

The branch manages MVS, VM (mainframe) and PC (microcomputer) technologies to provide service to the ministry. Voice and data telecommunications, system security, contingency planning and call centre services are also provided. The branch acquires, installs and maintains desktop and local area network (LAN) products, printing technologies and cabling systems.

Objective: *To reprogram ministry systems to accommodate the century change from 1999 to 2000.*

Strategy: Computer programs have until now processed and recorded the date using only the last two digits to signify the year. In the previous year, an assessment was conducted of the work required to change programs so they will read the year 2000 as the year which follows 1999. During 1997-98, the major portion of the reprogramming work was carried out and testing of the changes had begun.

Results: Reprogramming during the year prepared the branch to complete the task early in the 1998-99 fiscal year, well before the beginning of the new millenium.

Objective: *To ensure policy changes are reflected in the BC Benefits system.*

Strategy: Policy changes must be reflected in all ministry computer systems across the province. Branch staff implemented systems changes involving periods of disentitlement for clients, outstanding warrants against clients, 'temporarily-excused' designations, hardship initiatives and repayment of security deposits by landlords.

Results: Because the branch implemented cost-saving policy measures as quickly as possible in the BC Benefits system, the ministry was able to maximize its savings from these changes.

Objective: *To convert Banyan network servers within the ministry to Microsoft's Windows NT 4.0.*

Strategy: Systems Services Division (SSD) recognized the limitation with Banyan servers: systems support staff were unable to access LANs in field offices to troubleshoot and perform regular maintenance such as software upgrades and performance tuning. Microsoft Windows NT 4.0 Server has become the predominant network operating system (NOS) for the information technology industry and as such has a large support of tools and application support.

Results: A project was initiated to convert all Banyan Vines Servers to Windows NT. The conversion was completed with the exception of one server used by Information Systems Security (ISS) in support of the Banyan servers of the Ministry for Children and Families.

Objective: *To support local area networks.*

Strategy: The ministry LAN environment has been implemented for some groups in Victoria and Vancouver. The environment is supported by a number of people from SSD, a client representative, and external consultants and vendors. As the LAN environment expanded and matured, technical support was designed to be scaled to meet the requirements for regional LANs, and streamlined to meet the ministry's requirement for cost effective operations.

Result: A document was produced for use by LAN support staff within SSD and placed on the SSD LAN drive. It includes:

- a support model document outlining the role of the LAN support person;
- a service levels definition document outlining the response time to different priority requests;
- an outline of the particular responsibilities of LAN support staff;
- a description of the communications methods and flow, and problem assignment and tracking when support staff receive a call;
- an outline of support skill levels needed for adequate support to clients;
- a pilot support model showing the step-by-step progression of a support request through decision points and action points;
- a log form distributed to pilot-group participants to record customer satisfaction for each support request. Responses helped determine if the support model was viable to implement.

Objective: *To provide a Web browser for ministry users.*

Strategy: A request from users to browse the Web initiated a project to assess the features of Internet Explorer 3.0 (IE 3.0). A business consultant determined that the primary requirement was to be able to browse the web for information, and other features such as e-mail, netmeeting or newsgroups were not needed.

Result: IE 3.0 was implemented for selected ministry users for use of the search feature only. Configurations, minimum hardware requirements and support requirements were identified for various platforms and a process was identified for users to request the software.

Objective: *To convert analog cellular phones to digital equipment.*

Strategy: To improve clarity, range, and security of mobile voice communications, a project was initiated and managed by the telecommunications services unit to replace all analog cellular phones with dual mode (digital/analog autosensing) phones.

Results: All phones were replaced expediently, with minimal service interruptions for staff requiring mobile voice communications.